DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 328 991 EA 022 701

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TITLE Teacher Empowerment: Three Perspectives.
PUB DATE Nov 90
NOTE 41p.; Paper presented at the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration (Atlanta, GA, November 11-13, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Organization; *Conservatism; *Curriculum Development; Democratic Values; Education Work Relationship; Elementary Secondary Education; Human Capital; Organizational Theories; *Participative Decision Making; Productivity; Social Stratification; *Teacher Participation; *Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS *Empowerment

ABSTRACT

To help administrators understand the organizational, social, and ideological forces impeding their efforts to empower teachers, this paper provides three critiques of teacher empowerment proposals from functionalist, structural Marxist, and poststructural perspectives. Although the 1980s reform reports promote a type of empowerment that accords teachers higher status and allows them more governance responsibility, the reports do not recommend giving teachers power over what schools teach. Such reports assume that policy makers will regulate curriculum by controlling the tests used to evaluate school outcomes. The three critiques suggest that the mainstream teacher empowerment proposals offer teachers neither the means nor the entitlement to redirect school mission. Such proposals actually limit teachers' role in shaping mission; teachers are allowed control over curriculum delivery, but not curriculum content. Under these auspices, teacher empowerment becomes a method to improve schools' productivity--a mission supporting schools' role in perpetuating the political economy's inequities. Teacher empowerment, designed to promote the conservative agenda, is at best severely constrained. At worst, it is a mystification attempting to win teachers' support while simultaneously restricting opportunities to gain power through self-directed or organized resistance. (66 references) (MLH)

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TEACHER EMPOWERMENT: THREE PERSPECTIVES

by

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Paper Presented at

the Annual Conference of the

Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration

Atlanta, Georgia

November 11-13, 1990

EA 022 701

This paper critiques proposals for teacher empowerment, particularly as these have been framed in recent reports calling for school reform. The critique is especially relevant to school administrators who are the ones charged with the task of implementing policies that support teacher empowerment and shared governance. Critical analysis of these proposals enables administrators to understand why organizational, social, and ideological forces may impede their efforts to empower teachers and give them a substantive role in school governance.

Using a hermeneutic approach, the paper provides three critiques of the proposals for teacher empowerment: a functionalist, a structural Marxist, and a post-structuralist critique. This approach treats teacher empowerment as an element of discourse that is amenable to deconstruction and, consequently, to some conscious manipulation within an ideological frame of reference.

The Proposals for Teacher Empowerment

According to Maeroff (1988), teacher empowerment is the process of enhancing teachers' status, knowledge, and access to decision making. This definition presupposes that most teachers do not have sufficient status, knowledge, or authority, and that various agencies (e.g., state legislatures, local school boards, and colleges of teacher education) should provide teachers with more of these benefits.

This conception of teacher empowerment is reflected in several of the reform reports that were published, widely distributed, and debated during the mid- to late 1980s. These reports, in part, recommended strategies for empowering teachers because such strategies had been associated in the research literature with what policymakers termed "school excellence." The researchers who produced this literature, however, were more cautious in their claims. They termed the best of

the schools they studied, "good schools," and noted that the association between these schools' organizational characteristics and their high quality was merely suggestive.

Teacher Empowerment in "Good" Schools

Several large-scale studies of schools concluded that teachers in good schools had a greater sense of efficacy than teachers in less good schools. Further, these studies suggested that teachers' sense of efficacy resulted from their involvement in making decisions about the schools' instructional programs.

Goodlad (1984), for example, conducted extensive observations in 38 elementary and secondary schools throughout the United States. His analysis included comparisons between schools that were found most satisfying to their constituents and those that were found least satisfying. He concluded that in the most satisfying schools there were established procedures for solving problems. In these schools teachers had considerable influence over decisions that related to the school as a whole as well as over decisions that related to classroom instruction. The faculties of these schools tended to be cohesive and their principals took active leadership roles.

Another large-scale study (Sizer, 1985) examined secondary schools only. This study made no systematic comparisons between the more and less effective schools although it did report differences in the quality of schools. In general, however, the report concluded that most high schools needed to improve. Among Sizer's five recommendations for school improvement, two related to teacher empowerment: (1) giving teachers and students more authority over their own work and (2) simplifying and making more flexible the structure of schools.

The Kappa Delta Pi study (Frymier et al., 1984) looked only at good schools.

These schools were nominated by local Kappa Delta Pi chapters; a selection committee then chose from among those nominated the schools that met general selection criteria. In such schools, teachers had considerable authority in decision making. Only 17 percent of the teachers in these schools indicated that they lacked sufficient authority over instructional decisions. In addition, these schools encouraged teachers to experiment with new methods.

Another study of "good" schools specifically addressed issues of empowerment. Lightfoot (1986) conducted case studies in six schools that were reputed to have positive climates and productive outcomes. In these schools she found that teachers were the "central actors in the chain of empowerment" (Lightfoot, 1986, p. 22). According to Lightfoot (1986, p. 22), such teachers "felt empowered by a school culture that supported experimentation and risk in their work."

The Logic of the Reform Reports

The findings from studies of "good" schools support a conception of teacher empowerment that appears in several of the reform reports of the 1980s. These reports, however, view empowerment somewhat differently from the way that the researchers viewed it. Notably, the reports view teacher empowerment as a prerequisite for school "excellence" rather than as an outcome of it. Consequently, "empowerment" serves as the means to an end, not as an end in itself. In fact, these reports suggest a complicated--and probably tenuous--causality: "empowerment" promotes "teacher quality," which in turn promotes "excellence." The logic that permits this interpretation is presented below.

The reform reports of the 1980s--unlike those of the previous decade--call for "school excellence." In these reports, "excellence" is linked with the economic and military interests of the United States (DeYoung, 1989). In fact, the reports imply

that "school excellence" will enable the U.S. to regain its economic and political supremacy in the global arena.

The emphasis on "excellence" forecasts a change in the purported mission of schools. According to Dollar (1983, p. 8), the emphasis of the reform reports "signals a move to cultivate the most academically able at the expense of the average and below-average ... It reflects an abandonment of commitment to equity in education for the sake of increased, but narrowly construed quality."

Policymakers, however, have not acknowledged this change publicly (Grant & Sleeter, 1985). They claim that the reports promote a dual agenda: quality and equity. According to this reasoning, schools have done students a disservice by focusing on basic skills. This focus--supported by the reform recommendations of the 1970s--has made it difficult for teachers to cultivate students' higher-level skills. Dollar (1983, p. 11) summarizes this view:

> Many consider the erosion of thinking and reasoning skills to be an unintended but direct consequence of overzealous emphasis on teaching 'the basics' and on an overly narrow conception of what constitutes basic skills especially in the age of technology.

This reasoning suggests that all students can benefit equally from the types of changes recommended to promote "excellence." Grant and Sleeter (1985, p. 155) question this claim; they comment that the reports "discuss curriculum as if students did not bring to school personal, cultural, or gender identities with them that might affect the meaning they derive from a curriculum." According to this analysis, the reports emphasize reforms that, if put into practice, would favor an elitist notion of quality over an egalitarian notion of accessibility.

Regardless of the merit of their assertions about "excellence," however, the reform reports do give wide exposure to the purported link between the quality of teachers and the quality of public schooling. Although most of the reports address

the issue of teacher quality, two in particular devote most of their attention to this concern (cf. Petrie, 1985). The Holmes Group (1986) report and the Carnegie Forum (1986) report both address the issue of teacher quality in their recommendations for the training, recruitment, and advancement of teachers. In addition, the Carnegie report explicitly associates improved teaching competence with increased accountability of teachers.

Training of Teachers. The Holmes and Carnegie reports offer two strategies for improving the quality of new teachers. First, they recommend that teacher education programs recruit students with greater academic talent; and second, they recommend that colleges and universities improve teacher training programs. According to these reports, teachers' training should include intensive preparation in the liberal arts. Following four years of such training, candidates should receive one year of professional training and supervised clinical practice.

Recruitment of Teachers. In order to attract more capable individuals to the occupation of teaching, the Holmes and Carnegie reports recommend that teachers be given salaries competitive with those of other equivalent occupations such as accounting (e.g., Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986). Especially important are increased starting salaries and new salary classification schemes. Such schemes would reward teachers' productivity as well as their levels of certification and seniority. They also would provide remuneration for the advancements in job function that teachers would make as they moved upward on the recommended career ladders.

The reports suggest that such schemes would make teaching a more professional and, hence, more attractive career. According to this logic, "greater numbers of higher quality people will enter teaching and stay as the profession achieves higher status, weeds out the incompetent, and provides meaningful financial and other

career rewards for the truly able and committed" (Mertens & Yarger, 1988, p. 32).

Advancement of Teachers. Both the Holmes and the Carnegie reports propose career ladders as a mechanism for retaining capable teachers. Career ladders offer teachers enhanced authority and status as they gain experience and advanced training. The reports present slightly different types of career ladders; but, in each report, the highest level of the ladder is reserved for an elite group of master teachers. These teachers would assume positions of leadership that might involve staff development activities, curriculum writing, and evaluation of other teachers' performance. The Carnegie report suggests that a career ladder of this sort would provide teachers with more authority in decision making, thereby strengthening both their autonomy and their collegiality.

Accountability of Teachers. The reports stress that teachers--regardless of how autonomous they become--need to be accountable for students' achievement (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986). The Carnegie report (1986, p. 83) claims,

> While it is important that teachers be invested with the authority and responsibility to exercise their professional judgment over a wide range of matters over which they currently have little control, that judgment ... must be subject to certain constraints. Governing authorities will have to develop means to assure themselves that students are making satisfactory progress toward agreed upon goals. They will also have to be prepared to take action to either reduce teacher discretion or change the makeup of the school leadership team if student learning falls substantially below expectation.

According to this report, teachers must become accountable not only for the improved performance of students, they must also become accountable for increased instructional efficiency (i.e., maximum student performance at minimum cost). The report maintains that accountability for these outcomes will be possible only when teachers have more direct access to the mechanisms of school governance. Finally, the report recommends that policymakers develop incentive systems that offer

teachers and schools monetary rewards for the improvements they make in educational productivity (i.e., efficiency).

Empowerment and Accountability

As the preceding discussion has indicated, the reform reports promote a sort of teacher empowerment that (1) accords teachers higher status in general and (2) gives them more responsibility and authority for school governance. The reports, however, do not recommend giving teachers power over what schools teach. As their accountability schemes imply, the reports assume that policymakers will regulate curriculum by controlling the tests used to evaluate school outcomes. In the next section of the paper, the three critiques address--among other related questions--the question of whether or not empowerment is a meaningful promise when it is coupled with accountability of this sort.

A Functionalist Critique

Functionalism provides a method for analyzing social systems, their constituent parts, and the mechanisms that make them work. It models itself on the natural sciences in several ways: (1) it assumes that sense data reflect objective reality, (2) it purports to explain objective reality not just describe it, (3) it relies on a logical method for deriving explanations, and (4) it requires that explanations be verified (see e.g., Bredo & Feinberg, 1982; Popper, 1968; Skinner, 1953/1982; Sztompka, 1974).

As it applies to social systems, functionalism also posits a necessary relationship between the structures of a system and its survival (Homans, 1970/1982). The ways that such structures operate to sustain the system, either as a static or a dynamic entity, define their functions (see e.g., Radcliffe-Brown,

1965). Although not all structures of a system or its component subsystems must be functional, the predominant thrust of their interplay must enable the system either to sustain itself (see e.g., Krupp, 1965), adapt (see e.g., Merton, 1949), or evolve (see e.g., Parsons, 1969). The process by which the system assures its survival, however, requires a fundamental balance within and among its structural elements. Continual equilibrium of this sort is not a condition of the system's survival; but the tendency toward equilibrium <u>is</u> such a condition (cf. Sztompka, 1974).

According to Sztompka (1974), the functionalist frame of reference includes five increasingly more complex types of analysis, each of which incorporates elements of the simpler types. The most complex, functional-subsystemic analysis, assumes that a system incorporates a set of interacting subsystems. This type of analysis suggests that the boundaries between subsystems are permeable, thereby allowing the elements of one subsystem to influence those of another. Such an analysis can focus on any of the functional interactions that characterize maintenance or goal attainment for any subsystem or for the system as a whole. Because it accounts for the complex interplay of elements in a system, functional-subsystemic analysis provides a valuable lens through which to view the proposals for teacher empowerment.

Although such analysis might proceed in any one of a number of different directions, the one included here--one of the most illuminating--is provided by human capital theory. This theory treats education as a commodity with a particular value in the marketplace (Levin, 1989). The value of education accrues either to the individual, whose return on an investment in education is reflected in wages, or to society, whose return on its investment in education is reflected in increased productivity (see e.g., Becker, 1964). Both individuals and collectivities make rational demands for education on the basis of their determinations of its costs and

benefits. According to this view, schools change in response to changes in these demands.

When one considers teacher empowerment proposals from the perspective of human capital theory, one can identify two important kinds of issues for further study. First are issues related to individual choice. A question that typifies this issue is: "how do the elements of the teacher empowerment proposals (e.g., career ladders, requirements for more advanced training of teachers) affect individuals' decisions to pursue the necessary training for teacher certification?"

An hypothesis based on the assumptions of human capital theory is that the economic benefits associated with career ladder programs will off-set additional costs associated with requirements for advanced training. This logic, though hypothetical, informs the prescriptions of the Carnegie Forum (1986). A competing hypothesis, also supported by the premises of human capital theory, maintains that individuals (and school districts) will choose to invert the career ladder in order to maximize their costs per benefit. According to this view, individuals who wish to become teachers will purchase the minimum amount of training (i.e., a Bachelor's degree) that will enable them to gain employment. School districts will hire these individuals in order to limit expenditures, since such minimally-trained teachers will cost districts less than more highly trained teachers. This hypothesis suggests that very few individuals will occupy any of the higher rungs of the career ladder.

A second set of issues reflects society's demand for educational services of particular sorts. These issues assume that there are important relationships between the empowerment of teachers and other school inputs and outcomes, in this case economic inputs and outcomes.

An analysis of this type considers the potential benefits of teacher

empowerment to the political-economy. Such an analysis of benefits can take one of two approaches, based on its determination of what is a benefit. One approach assumes that the primary benefit of schooling is its service in preparing students for different occupations (see e.g., Mincer, 1989; cf. Grubb, 1985). Another approach assumes that the primary benefit of schooling is its socialization of students to conditions of economic inequality (see e.g., Bowles, 1972/1980; Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Taking the first approach, one can examine the potential benefits of teacher empowerment for improving schools' capacity to train students for their future work roles. Teacher empowerment, which has been linked to schools' effectiveness in improving students' critical thinking, might address the espoused need of business and industry for workers capable of complex decision making (see e.g., National Commission for Excellence in Education, 1983).

This analysis, however, is credible only insofar as it meets two criteria: (1) it accurately describes the association between teacher empowerment and the development of critical thinking, and (2) it correctly reads the demands of business and industry. The first criterion cannot be met because the research supporting such a link has not yet been conducted. The second criterion has not been met because the evidence suggests that--in the future--business and industry will not require more workers trained as critical thinkers.

In fact, recent economic projections (see e.g., Leontief, 1982; Thurow, 1987) suggest that business and industry will need fewer skilled workers--especially those with highly developed skills in independent decision making--than they currently do. The recent claims of business spokespersons seem, therefore, to carry a message that misrepresents the true needs of business and industry. Perhaps, this overt message serves as a means of legitimating the attempts of business and industry to exert a

direct influence, and to expand their indirect influence, on school curricula (see e.g., DeYoung, 1989).

This interpretation is supported by a second approach that premises its claims on human capital theory. Taking this approach, one can examine the influence of teacher empowerment on schools' attempts to differentiate students on the basis of their background characteristics into occupational groupings of unequal social value. Bowles (1972/1980, p. 125) describes the reasoning implicit in this type of analysis:

> (1) schools have evolved in the United States not as part of a pursuit of equality, but rather to meet the needs of capitalist employers for a disciplined and skilled labor force, and to provide a mechanism of social control in the interests of political stability; and
>
> (2) as the economic importance of skills and well-educated labor has grown, inequalities in the school system have become increasingly important in reproducing the class structure from one generation to the next.

Using this type of analysis, one might consider the ways in which the proposals for teacher empowerment support schools' differential allocation of educational benefits and, as a result, the true needs of business and industry for a stratified work force. Such an analysis, however, depends--like the one above--on the purported association between teacher empowerment and the development of critical thinking skills. Until this association has been demonstrated empirically, the following analysis must be regarded as speculative. Nevertheless, its logic is interesting.

By assuming that teacher empowerment is associated with the more global school goal of promoting critical thinking, this analysis suggests that teacher empowerment supports an unequal distribution of educational benefits. Although proponents of "school excellence" claim that instruction in critical thinking represents a benefit

to all students (see e.g., Bell, 1988), critics maintain that it provides a benefit only to advantaged students (see e.g., DeYoung, 1989).

If the critics are correct, teacher empowerment--to the extent that it alters the mission of schools--may help produce conditions that foster inequality. Notably, the mission to develop critical thinking skills may shift schools' focus from the needs of the majority to the needs of an elite minority. Such conditions would increase the frequency with which lower class students dropped out of school, thereby limiting the benefits they might receive from additional years of schooling. Moreover, the empowerment of teachers appears more likely to occur in relatively affluent schools where concern for the academic program takes precedence over concern for maintaining social control (see e.g., Anyon, 1980).

This line of reasoning seems to be supported by Chubb and Moe's (1990) recent post-hoc analyses of the High School and Beyond data set. These researchers found that those schools most likely to involve teachers in shared governance were also the most advantaged: those in relatively affluent neighborhoods that served students of above average ability.

Implications of the Functionalist Critique

A functionalist argument, no matter how plausible, requires continual verification in the empirical world. Chubb and Moe's research offers the first such attempt, but it is limited because the schools studied did not intentionally set out to promote teacher empowerment and shared governance. Future research will need to frame and test research questions based on the competing hypotheses derived from the mainstream and the critical perspectives of human capital theory. As teacher empowerment becomes a reality--if it does--researchers will be able to evaluate its relationship to the development of students' critical thinking skills. Moreover,

they may also be able to examine the degree to which teachers in different types of neighborhoods are empowered and the differential effects of the instruction delivered by "empowered" teachers on the attainment of students from different class and race backgrounds.

In spite of their limited empirical grounding, the functionalist arguments do provide school administrators with a preliminary framework for evaluating constraints to meaningful teacher empowerment. These include the following:

(1) Individual teachers may not see an economic benefit to empowerment and, consequently, may refuse to participate in programs of shared governance.

(2) To reduce the costs associated with teacher empowerment, school boards may choose to hire fewer "master" teachers and more "novice" teachers or paraprofessionals.

(3) Teacher empowerment may not prove effective in cultivating critical thinking skills.

(4) Teacher empowerment may increase the efficiency of a system that delivers differential benefits to students of different class and race backgrounds.

A Structural Marxist Critique

Whereas a functionalist perspective requires its hypotheses to be tested empirically, a structuralist perspective does not. Principally descriptive, such a perspective identifies patterns, replicated within the local structures of a social system, that provide telling examples of how the more global system operates. For the purposes of this paper, the proposals for teacher empowerment provide such an example.

In order to use structuralism as a mode of critique, however, it is necessary to adopt a structuralist frame of reference that addresses itself to the role of education in society. A logical choice is the structural Marxism of Althusser and Poulantzas.

The structuralism of these theorists is based on the fundamental notions of

scientific Marxism: surplus value, exploitation, profit, and capital. These dynamic processes bind the means of production to the relations of production. Through such processes, capitalists exploit workers in order to derive profit. They justify this exploitation in two ways: (1) by claiming to make a fair exchange of wages for work, and (2) by claiming that profit is an equitable return on their capital investment.

Because they own the means of production (i.e., capital), capitalists are in a position to purchase the time and energies of workers. Workers, by contrast, have no choice but to sell their labor: they do not have access to the means (e.g., machinery, buildings, production processes) that would permit autonomous production. Although workers receive wages for their labor, they give up control over their own labor power. Consequently, laborers must use the equipment and processes that the capitalists provide in order to produce manufactured goods from raw materials.

When such goods are sold, they produce profit. This profit actually represents four types of value: the value of the raw materials, the value of the ground rent, the value of the interest that the capital investment generates, and the value of the labor (Heilbroner, 1980). Capitalists, however, seek to extract additional value from the labor of workers. Such additional value drives the increased productivity of the economic system and reifies the class privilege of the capitalists. In order to derive profit, capitalists disequilibrate the exchange between labor power and wages. The result is the production of surplus value, which represents pure profit (i.e., extra value created by labor during the course of production). Surplus value provides capitalists with a way to increase their capital and, as a consequence, their domination of the relations of production.

Although the economic relations of production have considerable influence over this process, they are not sufficient to guarantee workers' acceptance of its terms.

Workers might, for example, question capitalists' right to such great benefit for such little exertion. To assure workers' willingness to accept this arrangement, therefore, capitalists rely on other mechanisms of social and ideological control. According to Marx (1865-66/1977, p. 175),

> each particular mode of production, and the relations of production corresponding to it at each given moment, in short "the economic structure of society," is "the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness" ... "the mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life." [Punctuation is Marx's; he is quoting one of his earlier works.]

Just as the economic relations of production determine other features of social life, so do the features of social life (e.g., law and politics) serve the economic relations of production. Marx, however, does not give elaborate explanations of the ways in which law, politics, or other mechanisms of the superstructure influence the economy (Heilbroner, 1980). Nevertheless, he does suggest that legal and ideological myths operate to obscure the exploitation of workers, a condition that is necessary for the extraction of surplus value from them (Godelier, 1970).

Detailed analysis of the role of the superstructure in reproducing the work force and in legitimating the terms of its exploitation is provided by later Marxist writers (Boggs, 1976). These writers base their analysis on Gramsci's (1971) concept, "ideological hegemony." This concept derives from Gramsci's elaboration Marx's distinction between the infrastructure (i.e., economic base) and the superstructure (i.e., political and legal apparatus). This distinction promotes an analysis of class consciousness and the means of its suppression (and the possible means of its liberation).

Gramsci differs from Marx in that he accords primary determinism to the ideological superstructure (Carnoy, 1984). Whereas Marx emphasizes economic determinism, Gramsci emphasizes political determinism. This determinism relies on both private and State mechanisms of domination. It results in the belief, by dominant and subordinate classes alike, that the prevailing social relations of production are both rational and inevitable. According to Carnoy (1984, p. 70), "hegemony involves the successful attempts of the dominant class to use its political, moral, and intellectual leadership to establish its view of the world as all-inclusive and universal, and to shape the interests and needs of subordinate groups."

In Gramsci's view ideological hegemony of this sort serves the ruling class in two ways. First, it limits the degree to which the working class can formulate and act on an ideology of opposition. By defusing such possible opposition, ideological hegemony allows the ruling class to assure its continued economic domination. Second, ideological hegemony fosters the reproduction of the economic system and the social relations of production that support it.

According to Gramsci (1971), schools play an important role in developing among future workers the skills and attitudes necessary for their participation in the work force. Moreover, schools promulgate ideologies that cultivate future workers' consensual agreement to the terms of their economic exploitation.

Because it was not his primary focus, Gramsci's consideration of the role that schools play in supporting dominant-class hegemony is cursory. The Marxist structuralists, however, use and expand Gramsci's assessment of the schools. They suggest that education (and other ideological apparatuses) not only reproduce social relations of production but also obscure them.

Althusser (1971), one the principal Marxist structuralists, incorporates the

concept of "hegemony" in his analysis of the superstructure. In this analysis he distinguishes between the repressive State apparatuses (e.g., government, army, police) and the ideological State apparatuses (e.g., family, school, church). Both are necessary, in Althusser's view, in order for capitalism to reproduce its division of labor and its relations of production. Schools serve a prominent role in social reproduction of this sort.

Poulantzas (1975, 1980) adds to this analysis crucial insights about the State's role in perpetuating capitalist relations of production. He claims that ideological hegemony has a more determining influence on social reproduction than does repressive domination (Carnoy, 1984). Of particular concern to Poulantzas, moreover, are the ways in which the State apparatuses simultaneously reproduce the class structure and obscure it from view. The latter process of mystification serves to legitimate the dominant relations of production and the ideologies that support them.

According to Poulantzas (1980), the State accomplishes this mystification by promulgating two myths: the myth of individualization and the myth of the nation-State. These myths serve to limit the development of class consciousness by focusing attention on units of analysis both smaller and larger than the unit of the social class.

In its focus on the individual, the State treats both workers and capitalists in isolation from their roles within the production process. Individualization is accomplished covertly through the capitalist division of labor, a mechanism that, by its very nature, isolates individuals and separates them from other workers. Additionally, the capitalist division of labor separates workers from the products of their labor, a consequence (i.e., alienation) that further reinforces their isolation. Finally, the capitalist system of justice accords individuals equal

treatment under the law. This right appears to assure their equality as well. While such a system of law actually represents the interests of the capitalist class, it appears to represent the interests of all individuals irrespective of class (cf. Bell, 1973).

Not only do the ideological State apparatuses promote the myth of the individual, they also promote the myth of the nation-State (Poulantzas, 1980). This myth recombines individuals under the auspices of a collective identity that serves to obscure class differences among them. Further, it gives them access to a political realm in which they can ostensibly resolve their economic and ideological differences. Such resolution, while defusing the essential class conflicts between workers and capitalists, results in a consensus among them. This consensus emerges because the existence of a plurality gives the appearance of democratic rule. It promotes the wide-spread belief that the political system gives every individual a voice as well as giving every faction an opportunity for political stewardship.

These beliefs, however, misrepresent the real nature of capitalism. Regardless of which faction gains power in a capitalist state, it governs according to the rules of capitalism. Consequently, even when an opposition party is in power, it nonetheless serves the interests of the capitalist class. The visible power relations disguise the underlying economic and social relations of production. The operation of a political system that allows for diverse leadership (including leadership by the opposition) legitimates the superstructure while at the same time hiding the true workings of the infrastructure. Such legitimation protects the structure as a whole from revolutionary class consciousness.

Poulantzas' analysis of the processes of social reproduction and legitimation primarily concerns the political apparatuses of the State. Nevertheless, it can be applied equally well to an analysis of the State's educational apparatuses. Several

critics (e.g., Apple, 1982; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1986; Oakes, 1986) of U.S. schools have attempted such an application. Their work examines the related processes of social reproduction, correspondence, and legitimation.

Teacher Empowerment as Mystification

In order to understand how the proposals for teacher empowerment contribute to mystification, it is important to describe their historical context. Chronologically, these proposals followed almost immediately a different set of proposals that emphasized the principal's role in promoting school effectiveness. The recommendation of the school effectiveness literature that principals become strong instructional leaders was, in effect, a call for principal empowerment.

Juxtaposed with the earlier proposals for "principal empowerment," the proposals for teacher empowerment appear to set up the conditions for a power struggle between principals and teachers. In order to understand the sources and consequences of such a power struggle within the ideological superstructure, it is necessary to distinguish teachers' and principals' class locations. Wright (1985) provides a frame of reference applicable to such an analysis.

Wright's analysis hinges on his notion of relations of exploitation. He proposes that in modern capitalism there are two categories of classes, owners and non-owners. Owners' interests are obviously different from those of non-owners. Among non-owners, however, are those with greater and lesser sympathies for the interests of owners. These sympathies are determined by the relative control that such non-owners have over two bases of exploitation: organization assets and skill/credential assets. Class locations based on these forms of exploitation are "contradictory," that is, sometimes their members promote the interests of owners, and sometimes of non-owners.

According to Wright (1985, p. 80), organization assets entail control over "the coordination of productive activities within and across labor processes." Control over these assets ultimately devolves to ownership, but in the social realm it also implicates management. Consequently, managers and bureaucrats, who have effective control over organization assets, maintain a contradictory class location.

Similarly, control over scarce, credentialed skills also contributes to exploitation. This form of exploitation is less obviously based in production than exploitation that results from control over organization assets. Consequently, it may be less likely to promote the alliance between contradictory classes and the dominant exploiting class. Similarly, it is more likely to promote the alliance between contradictory classes and the proletariat.

Using the distinctions (1) between owners and non-owners and (2) among three types of exploitation (i.e., based on production, organization assets, and skill/credential assets), Wright (1985) constructs a typology of 12 class locations. In this typology, teachers appear to be semi-credentialed workers. They have no control over the means of production, no control over organization assets, and some control over skill/credential assets. Principals appear to be semi-credentialed supervisors. Like teachers, they have no control over the means of production. Also like teachers, they have some control over skill/credential assets. Unlike teachers, however, principals appear to have some control over organization assets. This control may make principals more sympathetic to the interests of owners than teachers are. Teachers' alliances are more likely to be with the proletariat (Filson, 1988).

Principals as Managers; Teachers as Workers. Based on Wright's (1985) analysis, teachers' class location appears to be close to that of workers. Principals' class location, by contrast, is closer to that of managers. As a result

of their different class locations, teachers' and principals' interests may not coincide.

Considering the different class locations of teachers and principals, one might interpret the two, apparently conflicting sets of proposals for empowerment as an attempt to further distinguish the class interests of teachers and principals. By suggesting first that principals take charge of schools' instructional programs and then that teachers assume responsibility for school governance, the sequence of proposals establishes the basis for competition between these two groups. Under such conditions, principals might interpret teachers' autonomous (or collective) decision making as a threat to central control over school practice, a type of control principals are likely to endorse because of their greater affinity with the interests of owners.

Moreover, the two sets of conflicting proposals perpetuate the belief that the quality of schools is intrinsically connected to the means of their control (see e.g., Chubb & Moe, 1990). According to this logic, schools will improve their services to all students once the proper power relations are established. This mystification disguises the strong association between schools' quality (i.e., the benefits they provides their students) and the class backgrounds of the students they serve (see e.g., Sizer, 1985). In effect, the school--like any other apparatus of democratic pluralism--serves to conceal the fundamental determinism of relations in the infrastructure.

This view of the conflicting proposals for empowerment suggests the futility of radicals' hopes for the democratic governance of schools. From the radical perspective, teachers' autonomy and collective action are useful in counteracting the schools' role in social reproduction and legitimation. From the State's perspective, however, teacher empowerment of this sort would alter the covert

mission of schools, thereby giving schools a primary role in shaping the revolutionary consciousness of the working class. Such a role would be inimical to the interests of the State; and, consequently, the State is not likely to give teachers extensive power over the curriculum (i.e., the primary ideological apparatus of schooling). The State is, however, likely to assure that principals--whose class interests are closer to those of owners--have sufficient power to control teachers. Moreover, principals are likely to use their power as the State intends them to because it promotes the myth of their superior position and status with respect to teachers.

Nevertheless, the State does not want its control over schooling to be too obvious. Such overt control would anger teachers and possibly impel them to strengthen their alliances with workers. Therefore, the State has an interest in making teachers believe that they play a decisive role in school governance. The State can accomplish this mystification by giving nominal support to proposals for teacher empowerment. If teachers come to believe that "empowerment" of this sort enhances their status, they are likely to consent to the State's agenda for education, an agenda that supports processes of social reproduction and legitimation.

Implications of the Structuralist Critique

The structuralist critique suggests to administrators that substantive changes in school governance are not likely to occur as a result of the proposals for teacher empowerment. What may occur--superficial changes in the roles that teachers play and the status they are accorded--will probably do little to improve the quality of schools, especially those that serve children from working class backgrounds.

This critique, however, does imply that teachers (i.e., semi-credentialed workers) who align themselves with the proletariat may be able to participate in a meaningful class struggle that ultimately alters the dominant relations of production. Empowerment of this type emphasizes the similarities between the interests of teachers and those of workers. It is, therefore, inimical to the sort of empowerment considered in the recent proposals for school reform. These proposals offer teachers professional power and status--similar to that accorded principals--in exchange for their support of dominant class interests. This support (called "accountability" in the reform reports) assures that schools will continue to reproduce and legitimate the prevailing relations of production on which the political economy depends.

A Post-Structuralist Critique

A final critique of the proposals for teacher empowerment applies the methods of critical theory. Critical theorists claim that individual and collective actions can alter the basic rules of the structuralist universe, that is the "text." This transformation is possible because the universe is a mental construct. Although it is a pervasive construct and difficult to change, such change is nevertheless both possible and necessary.

Power (i.e., conscious and active resistance) is the instrumentality that permits such change. It enables social agents--most notably educators--to alter relations of knowledge; and changes in relations of knowledge alter the text itself. Since the text about which critical theorists are concerned entails capitalists' exploitation of workers, this ideological change promotes revolutionary restructuring of the political superstructure and, then, of the economic infrastructure.

Critical Theory as an Analysis of Education

Like the structural Marxists, critical theorists claim that schools are important mechanisms of social reproduction and legitimation. Unlike some structuralists, however, they question the direct correspondence between the social structure of schools and that of the political economy. They suggest, instead, that schools reproduce and legitimate the political economy through the mediating influence of ideology.

This ideology determines the way in which schools transmit the culture, knowledge, and prerogatives that "contribute to the ... hegemony of dominant groups" (Apple, 1982, p. 504). Conversely the transmission of these cultural artifacts determines the character of the ideology, whether it is manifested as the coercive prerogative of the ruling class or as the precarious docility of the working class. Critical theorists use the term, "cultural reproduction," to describe this more subtle form of correspondence.

Cultural capital serves as the basis for, and, in fact, the medium of exchange of, cultural reproduction. Giroux defines cultural capital as "the different sets of linguistic and cultural competencies that individuals inherit by way of the class-located boundaries of their families" (Giroux, 1983, p. 88). According to Bordieu and Passeron (1977, 1979), the content of culture and its valuation by the ruling classes (i.e., cultural capital) form the basis for a symbolic enactment of class conflict. This symbolic conflict, which takes place within schools, transmits to students of different backgrounds the ideological orientations appropriate to their social classes. It also establishes the relative status of the cultural capital possessed by individuals from different class backgrounds.

The active processes by which schools create cultural capital define their role in legitimating certain types of knowledge and discrediting other types of knowledge

(Apple, 1979). These processes occur overtly in the determination of what constitutes school knowledge. According to Apple (1979, p. 45),

> the problem of educational knowledge, of what is taught in schools, has to be considered as a form of the larger distribution of goods and services in a society. It is not merely an analytic problem (what shall be construed as knowledge?), nor simply a technical one (how do we organize and store knowledge so that children may have access to it and "master" it?), nor, finally, is it purely a psychological problem (how do we get students to learn "x"?). Rather, the study of educational knowledge is a study in ideology, the investigation of what is considered legitimate knowledge ... by specific social groups and classes, in specific institutions, at specific historical moments.

Legitimation of certain types of knowledge also occurs covertly through the mechanism of the "hidden curriculum." Giroux (1983, p. 47) defines the hidden curriculum as the set of "unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom life." Through the hidden curriculum, students learn patterns of behavior that conform to certain class-related expectations. The "hidden curriculum," however, does more than establish students' noncognitive responses to the social structure of schools, it also conditions their involvement with high-status school knowledge. As a consequence, working-class students--especially males--learn to exhibit the expected constellation of behaviors: aggression coupled with resistance toward school knowledge. Dominant class students, by contrast, conform to a different set of expectations, ones calling for (1) a reasonable degree of compliance with established codes of behavior and (2) acceptance--if not outright endorsement--of the school curriculum.

One limitation of this analysis of schools as agents of reproduction and legitimation is its failure to acknowledge the role played by the working class in shaping its own ideology. Giroux (1983, pp. 100-101) contrasts this one-sided description of cultural reproduction with another, more inclusive description:

> Instead of seeing domination as simply the reflex of external forces--capital, the state, etc.--Willis, Apple, Olson, and others have developed a notion of reproduction in which working-class domination is viewed not only as a result of the structural and ideological constraints embedded in capitalist social relationships, but also as part of the process of self-formation within the working class itself. Central to this perspective is a notion of culture in which the production and consumption of meaning are connected to specific social spheres and traced to their sources in historical and class-located parent cultures. Put simply, culture is not reduced to an overly-determined, static analysis of dominant cultural capital like language, cultural taste, and manners. Instead, culture is viewed as a system of practices, a way of life that constitutes and is constituted by a dialectical interplay between the class-specific behavior and circumstances of a particular social group and the powerful ideological and structural determinants in the wider society.

The suggestion that the working class is instrumental in shaping its own cultural character, and hence, in part, its own oppression, is verified in ethnographic studies of working-class students. According to Willis, whose 1977 ethnography of schooling points out the symbolic import of rebellious behavior in schools, the oppositional behavior of working-class male students both reflects class conflict and undermines it.

Because of this sort of dialectical interpretation of the production and transmission of cultural capital, critical theory supports a theoretical framework for analyzing schooling as well as a practical program for transforming it. This combination of critique and praxis enables the deconstruction of text premised on hegemonic assertions and the consequent reconstruction of alternative text premised on emancipatory assertions. Such an interrogation can be directed toward schooling itself (i.e., by viewing the social formation as a kind of text), or it can be directed toward any discourse that purports to describe schooling. Since the proposals for teacher empowerment are discourse, the latter approach to interrogation seems warranted.

Interrogating the Text of Teacher Empowerment

A critical analysis of the proposals for teacher empowerment first seeks to identify their ideological frame of reference and, then, to alter it. These tasks can be accomplished by applying a set of questions, like those that Lind-Brenkman (1983) developed for analyzing school textbooks, to interrogate the discourse of teacher empowerment.

The following questions seem to provide an adequate basis for deconstructing and reconstructing the text of that discourse (cf. Lind-Brenkman, 1983): (1) Who were the sponsors of the proposal? What were their interests in seeing it implemented? (2) For what audience(s) was the proposal intended? What were their interests in seeing the proposal implemented? (3) What was the content of the proposal? What was omitted? Did the proposal contain obvious prejudices? What were they? (4) What alternative interpretations of reality did the proposal obscure?

(1) Who were the sponsors of the proposal? What were their interests in seeing it implemented? Many groups sponsored proposals for teacher empowerment, but the most influential were the national and state commissions. These groups used the findings from research on "good schools" to frame policy recommendations. Their recommendations responded to the criticisms of U.S. education that appeared in earlier reports, the most prominent of which was A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Two of these sets of policy recommendations included elaborate proposals for teacher empowerment: the report of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (1986) and the report of the California Roundtable on Educational Opportunity (1985). These groups represented somewhat different interests. The task force that wrote the Carnegie report was organized by the Carnegie Corporation and represented

that organization's interest in promoting welfare capitalism (cf. Spring, 1985). According to Spring (1985, p. 77), "the basic tenet of welfare capitalism is that to avoid serious social discontent in a capitalist society, some intervention to aid those in dire economic-social need is necessary." Such intervention reduces social unrest and, as a result, enables capitalism to persist.

The interests of the California Roundtable seemed more limited in scope. This group, comprised of state-level leaders from public and higher education in California, ostensibly convened in order to "discuss issues that interlink K-12 and higher education in California, with particular concern for issues of access and opportunity" (California Roundtable, 1985, p. 1). Nevertheless, the group had clear ties to the business community. The task force that produced the recommendations included numerous business leaders, and the work of the task force was funded by the California Casualty Insurance Group.

In spite of their superficial differences, both commissions gave similar rationales for their proposals. They cited the economic need for changes in education. In addition, they noted the role that such changes would play in supporting democratic values. The Carnegie report (1986, p. 3) concluded,

> If our standard of living is to be maintained, if the growth of a permanent underclass is to be averted, if democracy is to function effectively into the next century, our schools must graduate the vast majority of their students with achievement levels long thought possible for only a privileged few.

Similarly, the California Roundtable (1985, p. 2) claimed,

> We expect students to be taught to think, to analyze problems, to express themselves clearly and sometimes creatively, to learn about our complex world, and to be able to participate in its processes and institutions as informed citizens. We expect high school graduates to be prepared to compete in an increasingly complicated economy. And we expect our schools to prepare decent human beings. We expect this despite the variety of backgrounds, races, languages, and creeds in our society, and we expect it for every child.

According to Spring (1985) proposals of this sort link education to objectives of national policy, an association that has a variety of dangers. These include:

(1) confusion and financial strain within public schools;

(2) subordination of the needs of individuals to the needs of the business community; and

(3) perpetuation of an elitist system of education.

(abstracted from Spring, 1985, pp. 86-87)

The proposals for teacher empowerment seem to have been sponsored by policymakers who featured schooling as a primary influence in assuring the viability of capitalism. These policymakers appeared to promote consensual processes of school change rather than regulatory processes. Consent of this type, however, figures prominently in the reproduction of ideology: it makes the interests of the dominant classes appear to be the interests of everyone.

(2) For what audience(s) was the proposal intended? What were their interests in seeing the proposal implemented?

Although they were addressed to the public at large, the proposals for teacher empowerment, with their grounding in the "school excellence" movement, appeared to answer the challenges of conservative critics of school practice (Altbach, 1985). In spite of their rhetoric to the contrary, these proposed reforms supported the agenda that conservatives wanted to promote: a two-tiered system of education.

Carlson (1985) explains how teacher empowerment would contribute to such a system. He argues that middle-class communities would have the resources to

implement proposals for teacher empowerment but that lower-class communities would not. As a result, teacher empowerment with its purported capability of fostering "school excellence" would exacerbate inequities in school outcomes. Advantaged students might, as a result of such reforms, obtain a more rigorous education, but at the expense of disadvantaged students.

(3) What was the content of the proposal? What was omitted? Did the proposal contain obvious prejudices? What were they? As was discussed above, the proposals for teacher empowerment addressed four issues: (1) the training of teachers, (2) the recruitment of teachers, (3) the advancement of teachers, and (4) the accountability of teachers. In spite of their apparent differences, these four issues all devolve to one issue: the productivity of teachers.

With respect to the training of teachers, the reports encouraged teacher education programs to recruit students with greater academic talent. Such students would be more likely to maintain a rigorous academic focus when they became teachers. Another recommendation to improve the caliber of the teaching force involved salary incentives. Increases in teachers' salaries, however, would be tied to the determination of teachers' productivity. Through this process, teachers would be made accountable for students' achievement. Career ladders would serve as the mechanism for awarding promotions to teachers in accordance with their seniority, training, and productivity. Such arrangements would also give more responsibility to teachers at the higher levels of the career ladder.

Empowerment of the sort put forth in these proposals, however, ignored teachers' essential need to be engaged with students and with knowledge. In the guise of giving teachers greater power, these proposals seemed to reduce teachers' power, in part by discrediting their role in the development of curriculum. The proposals implied that most teachers' work involved curriculum delivery; only those

teachers at the highest levels of the proposed career ladders were suited to curriculum development. This view violates an essential premise of curriculum theory: the knowledge that children acquire not the knowledge to which they are exposed constitutes the curriculum. According to this view, curriculum is necessarily created in the daily interaction between teachers and students, not in the rarified domain of curriculum specialists (cf. Freedman, 1988).

A final problem with the content of the proposals for teacher empowerment was their covert racism. By recommending that colleges recruit more capable students into teacher education programs, the proposals were, in effect, supporting the use of standardized tests to select prospective teachers. Many states had adopted this approach in the early 1980s in response to the public demand for accountability. The use of such tests, however, had particularly deleterious consequences for prospective teachers from minority backgrounds. According to Petrie (1985, p. 241), "minority students proportionately perform much less well on such tests than do other students. This is a particularly distressing policy result when we are faced with rapidly rising proportions of minority children to be taught."

The content of the proposals for teacher empowerment, while ostensibly directed toward improvements in the quality of the teaching force, actually supported efforts to "deskill" and homogenize the work of teachers. Claiming to increase the collegial relationships among teachers and between teachers and administrators, the proposals actually included strategies, such as career ladders, that would further subdivide (and thereby expand) the school hierarchy. In general, the overt language of the proposals was emancipatory, but their covert aims were repressive (Popkewitz, 1988).

(4) What alternative interpretations of reality did the proposal obscure? In spite of the misdirected aims of the mainstream proposals, an emancipatory

conception of teacher empowerment does exist. According to this view, empowerment of teachers would involve their active resistance to dominant power relations in schools. Moreover, empowered teachers would reformulate curriculum, transform classroom discourse, and strengthen their alliances with oppositional political groups (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985).

McCutcheon (1988, p. 199) calls this mode of practice, "deliberationist." In her view,

> Were this deliberationist perspective used in a school system to organize the curriculum, it would involve teachers collaboratively across the grade levels, within and across subject matters, to wonder together about scope, sequence, and integration. The process of deliberation and action research would lead to a sense of ownership of the curriculum, and this vested interest in it would bring about reformulations of it as problems were identified.
> (McCutcheon, 1988, p. 201)

Aronowitz and Giroux (1985, pp. 216-217, passim) expand this conception by suggesting that the practice of deliberationist, or in their terminology, "critical pedagogy," would result in "emancipatory forms of schooling."

> [This pedagogy] would stress forms of learning and knowledge aimed at providing a critical understanding of how social reality works, it would focus on how certain dimension of such a reality are sustained, it would focus on the nature of its formative processes, and it would also focus on how those aspects of it that are related to the logic of domination can be changed.
> (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985, p. 217)

According to Giroux (1989, p. 729), such a conception of schooling would change the way teachers are viewed.

> instead of defining teachers as clerks or technicians we should see them as engaged and transformative intellectuals ... Central to this position is the need for reforms that enable teachers to work under conditions in which they have time to reflect critically, conduct collaborative research, engage in dialogue with their students, and learn about the communities in which their schools are located.

Through these processes teachers would acquire the characteristics of moral

craftspersons: they would come to exhibit concern not only about the goals of instruction but also about the ethical implications of their actions and the actions of the schools in which they work (Zeichner & Liston, 1987). This role would enable teachers to encounter students as individuals. Greene (1986, p. 20) sees this as a gradual process by which teachers become aware "that every young person must be encountered as a center of consciousness, even as he or she is understood to be a participant in an identifiable social world."

The role of moral craftsperson would also give teachers the authority and the responsibility to analyze the various educational practices that they might select as well as those implemented by the schools in which they work. An analysis of this sort would require teachers to examine the values that underlie educational practices and to make ethical choices among them (Sirotnik & Clark, 1988). Ultimately, this process would engage teachers in critical reflection about their schools. Through this reflection they would "begin to challenge the power of the relationships that define [the schools'] structure and function" (Sirotnik & Clark, 1988, p. 663).

Implications of the Post-Structuralist Critique

Like the structural Marxist critique, the critique based on critical theory shows how the proposals for teacher empowerment sanction and enhance schools' role in the production and transmission of cultural capital. Unlike the structuralist perspective, however, the critical perspective questions the necessity of this role. It supports a conception of empowerment that entails resistance to the ideological hegemony of the dominant class.

Such resistance and the emancipation that it encourages emerge from the language of possibility. According to critical theorists, this is the language that

transformative intellectuals must use in their classrooms in order to promote the self-determination of students and their participation in the "culture of democracy" (cf. Beyer, 1988, p. 229).

School administrators who wish to encourage empowerment of this type will, of course, recognize its revolutionary connotations. In doing so, they will need to accept the consequences in the political arena for their own actions on behalf of teacher empowerment. Additionally, they will need to take whatever measures they can to protect the teachers with whom they work from the overt and covert mechanisms that will inevitably attempt to suppress democratic governance, coopt class consciousness, and reaffirm dominant-class ideology.

Summary

The three critiques that this paper attempted all suggest--in somewhat different ways--that the mainstream proposals for teacher empowerment offer teachers neither the means nor the entitlement to redirect the mission of schools. In fact, these proposals limit teachers' role in shaping such a mission: although they give teachers control over the delivery of curriculum, they take away their control over the content of that curriculum. Under these auspices teacher empowerment becomes a method to improve the productivity of schools--a mission that supports schools' role in perpetuating the inequities of the political economy.

Consequently, a cautious reading of these proposals--while acknowledging their innovative strategies--recognizes their conservative aims. Teacher empowerment, designed to promote the conservative agenda, is--at best--a severely constrained type of empowerment. At worst, it is a mystification put forth in an effort to win the support of teachers while at the same time restricting their opportunities to gain power through self-directed or organized resistance.

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